UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND, et al.,
Plaintiffs,
v.
DONALD J. TRUMP, et al.,
Defendants.

C.A. No.:

DECLARATION OF JENNIFER R. NELSON

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I, Jennifer R. Nelson, hereby declare as follows:

1.   I am a resident of New Jersey. I am over the age of 18 and have personal knowledge of all the facts stated herein, except as to those matters stated upon information and belief; as to those matters, I believe them to be true. If called as a witness, I could and would testify competently to the matters set forth below.

2.   In February 2021, I was appointed as the State Librarian for the New Jersey State Library, an affiliate of Thomas Edison State University. Prior to holding this position, I served as director of Minnesota State Library Services, a division of the Minnesota Department of Education that administers state and federal programs for libraries and the Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library. In addition to state-level work, I also have more than 25 years of experience at large urban and county libraries.

3. The New Jersey State Library (NJSL) is responsible for maintaining library resources and information services over a broad range of subjects and for providing special library services for the legislative, executive and judicial branches of state Government, supplemental library service for New Jersey libraries and direct library services for persons with disabilities. NJSL is also charged with coordinating a statewide system of libraries in New Jersey and administering State and federal programs for the development of libraries, library facilities, library resources and library services in New Jersey. NJSL requires reports that are necessary for the proper administration of its duties. This includes gathering and publishing annual and occasional statistics on libraries in the State.

4.   As State Librarian, I am responsible for directing and administering the work of the New Jersey State Library and administering all laws which are included under the jurisdiction of

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the library, including the fiscal oversight and management of federal and State grant and aid programs. Further, I am certified by New Jersey's Legal Officer to assure and certify that the New Jersey State Library is a State Library Administrative Agency with the fiscal and legal authority and capability to administer all aspects of the Library Services and Technology subchapter 20 U.S.C. Chapter 72. Under my direction, NJSL establishes the State's policies, priorities, criteria, and procedures necessary to the implementation of all programs under this subchapter.

5.   I submit this declaration in connection with Executive Order 14,238, "Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy," which directed seven federal agencies, including the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), to eliminate any non-statutory components and functions to the maximum extent consistent with applicable law, and to reduce the performance of any statutory functions and associate personnel to the minimum presence and function required by law.

6.   Given my 15 years of experience working directly with IMLS in several different capacities, I believe that Executive Order 14,238 will cause IMLS to be unable to administer financial awards and/or programs (specifically the Grants to States program) on which the New Jersey State Library relies and on which it expects to rely in the future, causing significant harm to New Jersey residents, including those with disabilities, K-12 and higher education students, and the New Jersey State Library.

The Museum Library Services Act

7.   In 1996, Congress established the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) by the Museum and Library Services Act of 1996, which amended the Museum Services Act (20 U.S.C. § 961 *et seq*.). The Library Services and Technology Act, which was enacted as part of the Museum and Library Services Act in 1996, authorized the distribution of federal funding

to help support libraries across the United States. The Museum and Library Services Act was most recently reauthorized in 2018, codified at 20 U.S.C. § 9101 *et seq.*

8.   IMLS, which administers the Library Services and Technology Act, is authorized to provide federal funding to State library administrative agencies. 20 U.S.C. § 9133(a). A "State library administrative agency" is an "official agency of a State charged by the law of the State with the extension and development of public library services throughout the State." *Id.* § 9122(4). The New Jersey State Library is New Jersey's designated State library administrative agency.

9.   In order to receive funds under the Library Services and Technology Act, each State library administrative agency must submit to IMLS its five-year state plan, which describes the State library administrative agency's needs and goals and the ways in which the State intends to use the federal funding to meet those needs. *Id.* § 9134. A copy of New Jersey's 2023 - 2027 LSTA Five Year Plan is attached.

10.   Five-year plans that satisfy the statutory criteria are approved by the Director of IMLS. 20 U.S.C. § 9134(e). After the plan has been approved, IMLS allocates funding through a population-based statutory formula, *id.* § 9131(b) and pays to each State the Federal share of the activities in the plan, which is 66 percent. *Id.* § 9133(b).

11.   Section 9141 provides that:

> Of the funds provided to a State library administrative agency under [20 U.S.C. § 9123] section such agency shall expend, either directly or through subgrants of cooperative agreements, at least 96 percent of such funds for—
>
> (1) expanding services for learning and access to information and educational resources in a variety of formats (including new and emerging technology), in all types of libraries, for individuals of all ages in order to support such individuals' needs for education, lifelong learning, workforce development, economic and business development, health information, critical thinking skills, digital

literacy skills, and financial literacy and other types of literacy skills;

(2) establishing or enhancing electronic and other linkages and improved coordination among and between libraries and entities, as described in [20 U.S.C. § 9134(b)(6),] for the purpose of improving the quality of and access to library and information services;

(3)
    (A) providing training and professional development, including continuing education, to enhance the skills of the current library workforce and leadership, and advance the delivery of library and information services; and

    (B) enhancing efforts to recruit future professionals, including those from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, to the field of library and information services;

(4) developing public and private partnerships with other agencies, tribes, and community-based organizations;

(5) targeting library services to individuals of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to individuals with limited functional literacy or information skills;

(6) targeting library and information services to persons having difficulty using a library and to underserved urban and rural communities, including children (from birth through age 17) from families with incomes below the poverty line (as defined by the Office of Management and Budget and revised annually in accordance with section 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2))) applicable to a family of the size involved;

(7) developing library services that provide all users access to information through local, State, regional, national, and international collaborations and networks; and

(8) carrying out other activities consistent with the purposes set forth in [20 U.S.C. § 9121], as described in the State library administrative agency's plan.

20 U.S.C. §§ 9141(a)(1)-(8).

12.   IMLS, which administers the Museum and Library Services Act, is authorized to provide federal funding to museums in the form of grants, cooperative agreements, and other forms of assistance. 20 U.S.C. § 9173(a). IMLS is also authorized to provide federal funding to state governments to administer to museums. *Id.*

13.   A "museum" is a public, tribal, or private nonprofit agency or institution organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational, cultural heritage, or aesthetic purposes, that utilizes a professional staff, own or utilizes tangible objects, cares for tangible objects, and exhibits the tangible objects to the public on a regular basis." 20 U.S.C. § 9172(1).

14.   Section 9173(a) provides that IMLS may enter into agreements to pay the federal share of the cost of:

> (1)   supporting museums in providing learning and access to collections, information, and educational resources in a variety of formats (including exhibitions, programs, publications, and websites)   for   individuals   of   all   ages;
>
> (2) supporting museums in providing learning partnerships with the Nation's schools, including tribal schools, and developing museum resources, capabilities, and programs in support of State and local efforts to offer a well-rounded educational experience to all students; and
>
> (3) supporting the conservation and preservation of museum collections, including efforts to: provide optimal conditions for storage, exhibition, and use; prepare for and respond to disasters and emergency situations; establish endowments for conservation; curate, stabilize, and organize object-related information; and train museum staff in collections care.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services' Impact in New Jersey

15.   In 2024, IMLS invested $180 million in libraries across the United States under its Grants to States Program. New Jersey received $4.5 million, which represents the Federal share of the activities in the approved plan, totaling 66 percent.[1]

16.   The New Jersey State Library uses these federal funds to support many of its programs. In the Federal Fiscal Year 2024 Budget, New Jersey State Library is using these federal funds to support the following programs:

a. $1,743,500 to the Talking Book & Braille Center.

b. $1,715,240 for Statewide – Databases

c. $26,000 for Subscriptions.

d. $40,000 to Digital Literacy.

e. $801,423 to State Library Technology Services, including $569,090 to JerseyConnect and $232,334 to Library Support Services.

17.   The New Jersey IMLS Grants to State Programs amounts to $4,326,163 in Total Direct Costs and $180,257 in Indirect Costs, totaling $4,506,420 for the Total FFY 2024 Budget.

18.   Loss of these funds would severely impact NJSL's ability to provide direct services to almost 13,000 Blind and print-disabled library patrons through the NJSL Talking Book and Braille Center (TBBC), technology services to 350+ NJ public libraries through JerseyConnect, and curtail access to a suite of 24 online databases for research, education, and business development available to all residents. NJSL would also lose the software needed to collect and analyze statistical data and the software that facilitates interlibrary loan between libraries in the state.

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[1] A chart showing the 2024 allotments can be accessed here:
https://www.imls.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/imlslstastateallotmenttablefy2024.pdf.

19.   In addition, the loss of funds would impact 17.5 FTE (20 people) at NJSL in jobs that accomplish these projects and other smaller scale initiatives.

20.   TBBC, formerly known as the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, is the only NJ library geared exclusively to serving the state's Blind and print-disabled population. Services are provided directly to TBBC patrons and to other eligible residents through the state's public libraries. TBBC is fully funded with Federal Grants to States funds.

21.   JerseyConnect provides a range of backbone technology services to 350+ libraries in the state such as internet and managed WiFi services, email hosting, network access and cloud services at no cost to the libraries. JerseyConnect serves libraries in all 21 counties and covers 80% of the state's population. While the technology used by JerseyConnect itself is funded with state Library Network funds, Grants to States funds 3 highly skilled technical FTE who run the program.

22.   The online databases purchased with Grants to States funds are used in public, academic, and K-12 libraries throughout the state and in some cases are the only online research tools available to NJ's smaller, needier libraries. The resources are also available to any New Jersey resident through geolocation. In calendar year 2024, these resources were searched 42,069,786 times.

23.   The $4.5 million annual allotment from IMLS represents approximately 30% of NJSL's operating funds, which include our Direct State Service and Library Network appropriations.

24.   In addition to the Grants to States program, libraries and museums in New Jersey may apply to IMLS for discretionary grants or special initiatives. These are competitive awards and the amounts vary annually. These are typically project-based. While the amount may represent a large percentage of a small museum's annual budget, funds are intended to be for short-term use

and not for operational expenditures. The following is a list of NJ recipients of IMLS discretionary grants or special initiatives from 2022-2024:

Fiscal Year	Institution	Program	Federal Funds
2024	Rutgers University School of Communication, Dept of Library and Information Science	National Leadership Grants-Libraries	$150,000
2024	Rowan University	Inspire! Grants for Small Museums	$23,488
2024	Lawnside Historical Society	Museum Grants for African American History and Culture	$34,180
2024	Montclair History Center	Inspire! Grants for Small Museums	$24,635
2023	Long Branch Free Public Library	National Medals for Library Services	$10,000
2023	Grounds for Sculpture	Museums for America	$250,000
2023	New Jersey State Library	National Leadership Grants-Libraries	$748,588
2022	Newark Museum of Art	Museums of America	$91,000
2022	Visual Arts Center of New Jersey	Museums of America	$50,760
2022	Atlantic City Free Public Library	American Rescue Plan for Museums and Libraries	$50,000
2022	The College of New Jersey	Save America's Treasures	$311,594
2022	Visual Arts Center of New Jersey	American Rescue Plan for Museums and Libraries	$21,359
		Total	$1,765,604

25.   In 2023, a $748,588 National Leadership Grant was awarded to NJSL to work with the NJ Department of Education and other partners to develop professional development, an

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instructional framework, and learning activities to support NJ's upcoming implementation of its Information Literacy Standards. Losing this grant would have implications for the capacity of the state's teachers and librarians to address information literacy in the classroom and result in the cancellation of three consultant contracts and a subgrant worth approximately $622,000 total. The project is poised to have a national impact as NJ is the first state in the US to require that K-12 information literacy learning standards be addressed in classrooms.

26.   In addition to administering federal funding to States, IMLS also provides the following programs and services: the annual Public Library Survey, the bi-annual State Library Administrative Agency Survey, as well as statistical analyses of these data collection efforts; technical assistance in the management of federal data and federal programs; and convenings that increase knowledge and capacity of librarians to address community needs. The Library Statistics Working Group, of which I am a member, is a federal-state cooperative on library data, establishes the criteria and processes for the Public Library and State Library Administrative Agency surveys with IMLS, ensuring that data collected is accurate, relevant and accessible.

27.   The New Jersey State Library's budget for this year has relied on receiving $4.5 million from IMLS, and we made plans and allocated funding for staffing, services, software, data collection, and online resources based on the anticipated receipt of Federal funding promised. In addition to annual outlays from the Grants to States program, the National Leadership Grant on information literacy has engaged consultants to create instructional activities, establish professional development and conduct program evaluation. The project is scheduled to roll out training and instructional activities in the next six to eight weeks, while preparing educators for Fall 2025 implementation of the project. These funds were allocated in 2023.

28.   The New Jersey State Library relies on its partnership with IMLS through the Grants to States program to complete its mission. The annual allocation supplements its state budget and offers services that reduce or eliminate costs for local libraries and library users. With an approved Five-Year Plan in place, we anticipate IMLS funding of the full range of services already described through at least federal fiscal year 2027.

29.   Any pause in our federal funding would reduce the staff complement of the entire NJSL. 350+ public libraries would lose access to an integrated technology infrastructure that supports internet access. In addition to the service disruption caused, this would put an undue burden on local library budgets to fund costs in a mid-budget year revision. New Jerseyans would lose access to library services for at least a short period of time, and access to online databases for at least the next three years. NJSL provides internet services to its affiliate, Thomas Edison State University, and a pause on funding would be detrimental to this online university's ability to carry out its educational activities.

30.   As reimbursement-based programs, Grants to States and National Leadership grants depend on the availability of knowledgeable IMLS staff to efficiently review and make payments. This is critical in a reimbursement-based program in which grantees, including NJSL, incur costs up front and any delays in payments impact NJSL's overall budget.

31.   A reduction in IMLS staff would pose a significant challenge for NJSL's ability to manage the Grants to States Program grant, as IMLS staff regularly provide critical on-demand technical assistance in interpreting federal requirements and processing reimbursement requests.

32.   Other IMLS programming plays a critical role in enabling NJSL to fulfill its mission. An annual Grants to States Conference provides an opportunity for NJSL program staff to receive updates on federal programmatic changes as well as to learn best practices from other

states. IMLS likely could not continue to hold this two-and-a-half day conference if its staff complement were reduced. Similarly, IMLS staff play a central role in the annual public library survey data collection process. A loss of staff to this program would remove unique statistical and methodological expertise that NJSL relies on when interpreting data and understanding how to apply definitions of terms to the collection of data. An annual State Data Coordinators Conference brings together IMLS staff and consultants to review and make decisions on the universe of data collection through the Library Statistics Working Group. The loss of this conference would result in NJSL staff having fewer resources available for completing this complex task.

31. NJSL staff and the larger library community have been impacted by the uncertainty of reimbursements and concerns related to our ability to pay current contracts and obligations. At this point in time, we are unable to provide certainty that any of our Grants to States funded services will continue for the remainder of this year and future years. We are unable to carry out activities that require service contracts or consultants using federal funds, which would cause delays in project implementation. As the recipient of a National Leadership Grant, the uncertainty around the status of this grant has caused our consultants, partners and contractors to express concerns about the viability of the project, and questions related to their ability to move forward on contract objectives.

32. NJSL has a history of timely submissions of all performance and financial reports related to Federal IMLS funding, as well as meeting all matching and Maintenance of Effort (MOE) requirements. Meeting annual MOE requirements has allowed for full funding of NJ's annual Grants to States allotment each year with no reduction due to missed targets. NJSL regularly receives high marks on annual submissions and Federal site visits, the most recent one of which was conducted in 2023.

33. In the next six months, we are scheduled to receive disbursements/reimbursements of $3,215,561 under our current Federal awards, including $2,476,657 in Grants to States funds and $738,904 in National Leadership Grant funds. These funds have been obligated by IMLS.

34. If we do not receive such disbursements/reimbursements, NJSL will need to shut down all of the programs discussed and lay off up to 20 staff, as we do not have funds to cover the shortfall.

35. NJSL relies on the Public Library Survey conducted by IMLS to better understand the status and condition of the State's public libraries. We provide technical support and guidance to libraries with this data, assessing if libraries are meeting state standards. We use the State and local data to benchmark changes in libraries over the years, and the data are used to inform legislators and other stakeholders about the impact of library services.

36. The elimination or delay in the survey collection and analysis would disrupt NJSL operations related to the distribution of State aid, our ability to provide guidance to library trustees and directors related to service levels, and to plan new buildings or adapt services to community changes, for example.

37. Should the termination of the Grants to States program occur, more than 13,000 people who are blind or print-disabled would suffer from the lack of access to library materials; the users of more than 350 libraries in all 21 counties would lose access to core library services which rely on the internet; and all residents of the state would be harmed by the loss of access to online databases that support student success, employment and business development. A termination or delay in the National Leadership Grant will risk causing the state's K-12 educators to be unprepared for the implementation of K-12 student academic information literacy standards.

38. On March 31, 2025, I received the below email from the IMLS advising that all of

its staff members were going to be placed on administrative leave effective immediately.

From: Teresa A. DeVoe <TDevoe@imls.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2025 2:39 PM
To: Teresa A. DeVoe <TDevoe@imls.gov>
Cc: Dennis Nangle <DNangle@imls.gov>; Madison Bolls <MBolls@imls.gov>; Cindy Boyden
<CBoyden@IMLS.gov>; Laura McKenzie <LMcKenzie@imls.gov>
Subject: all IMLS staff going on administrative leave today

EXTERNAL SENDER: Do not open attachments or click on links unless you recognize
and trust the sender.
TO: Chief Officers and LSTA Coordinators

Within the last hour IMLS received word that all staff are going to be placed on administrative leave,
effective today. We will not be able to work or respond to your emails, and we don't have any
information about future timelines related to this action.

Please share with other staff as appropriate, and please know how much we appreciate you and your
work.

Teri DeVoe
Associate Deputy Director, Grants to States
Institute of Museum and Library Services
955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Suite 4000
Washington, D.C. 20024
P: 202-653-4778
Website | LinkedIn | Facebook

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39. On March 31, 2025, I also received the below statement from AFGE Local 3403 on the status of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, advising that "[t]he status of previously awarded grants is unclear. Without staff to administer the programs, it is likely that most grants will be terminated."

A Statement from AFGE Local 3403 on the Status of the Institute of Museum and Library Services

Earlier today, the Institute of Museum and Library Services notified the entire staff that they are being placed on administrative leave immediately. The notification followed a brief meeting between DOGE staff and IMLS leadership. Employees were required to turn in all government property prior to exiting the building, and email accounts are being disabled today. Museums and libraries will no longer be able to contact IMLS staff for updates about the funding they rely upon.

In the absence of staff, all work processing 2025 applications has ended. The status of previously awarded grants is unclear. Without staff to administer the programs, it is likely that most grants will be terminated.

40. Because there is no staff to administer the Grants to States program, it is unlikely that New Jersey will receive the remainder of its 2024 Grants to States award of $2,476,657 as expenditures are incurred, which will cause immediate and irreparable harm to New Jersey. It is further unlikely that New Jersey will receive its estimated 2025 Grants to States Award of

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approximately $4.5 million by April 22, 2025 as expected, which will cause immediate and irreparable harm to New Jersey. New Jersey will also suffer immediate and irreparable harm from the loss of its National Leadership Grant remaining dollar amount of $738,904.

41. Without IMLS staff availability, NJSL will be unable to complete its 2024 Public Library Survey data collection effort. This data collection effort is used to calculate State aid, and the inability to complete it is an additional harm that affects more than 275 public libraries in the state. NJSL would also be unable to receive reimbursement for funds spent through March 31, 2025 from the Grants to States program ($441,577) and National Leadership Grant ($15,230), or to fulfill its statutory obligations under both programs.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing is true and correct. Executed on April 3, 2025, at Trenton, New Jersey.

JENNIFER R. NELSON

EXHIBIT A

New Jersey State Library
Library Services and Technology Act
2023-2027 Strategic Plan

New Jersey State Library
Library Services and Technology Act
2023-2027 Strategic Plan

Commissioned by New Jersey State Library
Jennifer Nelson, State Librarian

June 30, 2022

Consultation services provided by:
Kim Zablud, Advancing with Purpose

[Cover photograph: Spring Exterior at New Jersey State Library]

Connecting people with information through libraries

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Introduction

The New Jersey State Library (NJSL) serves the needs of a complex and diverse state, and - by extension - a complex ecosystem of libraries. Public libraries are organized and operated quite differently throughout the state, evidencing a blend of municipalities, county structures, regional collaboration, city and suburban environments, and rural and shore communities.

For many years, the state library has prioritized three main programs in their LSTA goals, equally available to all types of libraries. While these three programs carry forward, the 2023-2027 five-year plan is designed to support customization and innovation at the local level. The activities within the various projects will provide resources, tools, and opportunities that libraries can adopt differently based on their needs. Additionally, the activities aim to foster high-quality journeys and experiences that translate across multiple environments.

In developing the five-year plan, NJSL took a holistic view of its strategic objectives and services, which include but are not limited to the Grants-to-States program. The agency is investing in ways to work collaboratively across silos, with an emphasis on marketing and communications, equity, diversity and inclusion, and creating a unified learning organization. The LSTA projects and activities outlined herein will benefit from and mutually reinforce the state's larger portfolio of initiatives.

Thank you to the many individuals who contributed input and creativity to the process. Early on, library directors and library leaders openly acknowledged that different libraries would want very different things when it comes to seeing their LSTA dollars at work. The design team grappled with these tensions and trade-offs, building in feedback loops so New Jersey's libraries can continue to learn about what works best - together - over the next five years.

Mission and Vision Statement

The State Library of New Jersey exists to serve as the principal library of state government. In addition, it builds the capacity of all libraries in the state, and operates the New Jersey Talking Book & Braille Center. The State Library of New Jersey envisions a future in which all New Jerseyans have access to exceptional library services and the information resources they need to achieve their personal, educational, and professional goals.

Needs Assessment

New Jersey population and demographic data included herein was resourced from the 2020 United States Census, the 2010 United States Census (in limited cases where information was not available for 2020), the Municipal Revitalization Index, Migration Policy Institute, FCC Fixed Broadband Deployment 2020 Data Map, New Jersey Department of Labor, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2020 Disability Impacts Report, New Jersey Department of Education, Cornell University's Disability Statistics database, World Population Review, New Jersey Division of Elections, New Jersey Department of Corrections, and National Institute of Corrections. Sources of library operations and systems data used to assess needs and goals includes the NJSL 2020 Public Library Report, NJSL LSTA 2018-2022 Five Year Evaluation, focus groups with county public library directors, key informant interviews, and a staff survey distributed to all New Jersey libraries.

A PICTURE OF NEW JERSEY RESIDENTS

Geography & Demographics

Geographic diversity - The "Garden State" of New Jersey is home to 9,288,994 residents of 21 counties and 565 municipalities with approximately 94% of the population living in urban areas (2010 Decennial U.S. Census - most recent). Over the last ten years, New Jersey's population has increased by 5.7% with the highest percentage of population growth occurring in Hudson, Ocean, and Essex counties. Between 2020 and 2021, south New Jersey's rural populations have increased in Cape May (.6% to 1.5%), Salem and Burlington (.1% to .5%). The New Jersey State Planning Commission Policy Map to the right depicts development and redevelopment planning with metropolitan and suburban planning areas most densely mapped in counties adjacent to New York City and Philadelphia. Increases in both urban and rural counties will result in a need for increased library services and resource coordination, especially in rural counties with limited library funding.

Racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity - New Jersey remains the nation's most densely populated state and is racially diverse where 55% of the population are solely white, 21% are solely Hispanic or Latinx, 15% are solely Black or African American, 10% are solely Asian.6% are solely American Indian or Alaska Native, .1% are solely Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 2.3% of the population is two or more races. Almost a quarter of New Jersey's population is foreign born (22.7%). In 2019, 43% of foreign-born New Jersey residents spoke English less than "very well" with 32% of the total household population (*N*=8,370,265) speaking a language other than English at home. Of other languages spoken at home with English spoken less than "very well", Korean was spoken the most (55%) followed by Portuguese (46%) and Spanish (43%) (2019 Migration Policy Institute).

Age distribution and diverse abilities - The median age of New Jersey residents is 40 years old. New Jersey's over 65-year-old population is in line with the national trend of 16%, and 22% of New Jersey's residents are under 18 years old which is the same as the national percentage. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 2020 Disability Impacts report for New Jersey, 1 in 5 adults (1,415,625 total adults) in New Jersey have a disability with mobility (9%) and cognitive disabilities (9%) affecting the largest number of disabled New Jersey adults. The New Jersey Department of Education reports that as of October 2020, 18% of youth 3-21 years-old who are enrolled in public and private schools have a disability. The highest percentages of student disabilities are classified as having a specific learning disability (5.3%), speech or language impairment (3.76%), other health impairment (3.74%), and autism (1.78%).
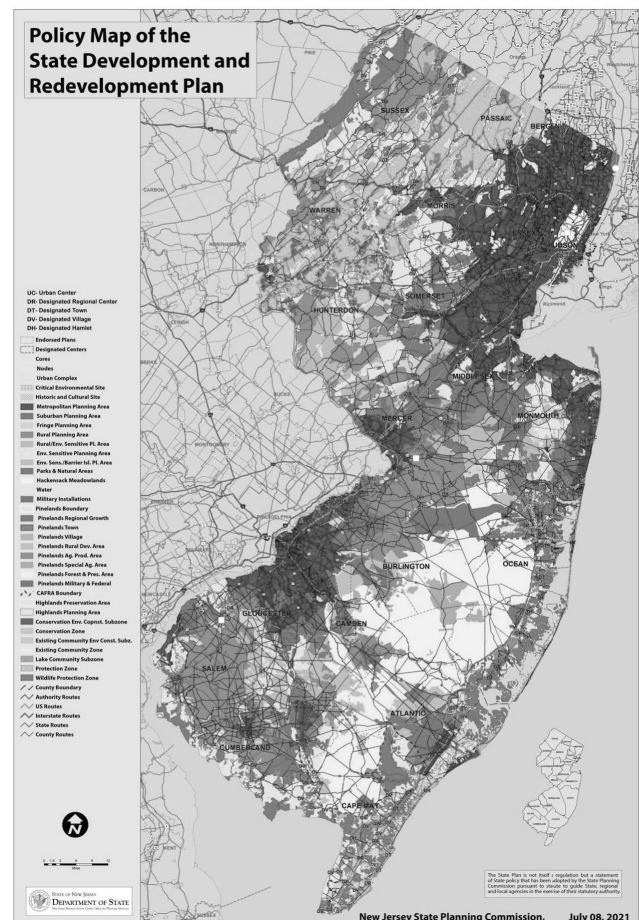
New Jersey State Planning Commission 2021 Policy Map
- Metropolitan Planning Area
- Suburban Planning Area
- Env. Sensitive Planning Area
- Rural Planning Area

Percentage of adults in New Jersey with select functional disability types
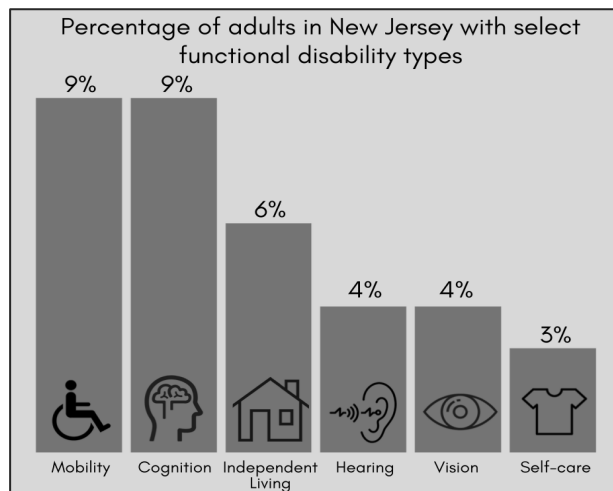
CDC 2020 Disability Impacts Report Chart

Public and Non-Public		
Disability Category	Classified	Percent
Autism	23949	1.78
Deaf–Blindness	21	0.00
Preschool Disabled	13655	1.02
Emotional Disturbance	6760	0.50
Hearing Impairment	1395	0.10
Intellectual Disability	5423	0.40
Multiple Disabilities	13148	0.98
Other Health Impairment	50264	3.74
Orthopedic Impairment	301	0.02
Specific Learning Disability	71172	5.30
Speech or Language Impairment	50489	3.76
Traumatic Brain Injury	402	0.03
Visual Impairment	365	0.03
Total	237344	17.68

New Jersey Department of Education
2020 Students with Disabilities Enrollment

Income, Education & Employment

Income diversity - New Jersey median household income has risen from $72,093 to $85,245 since 2015 and remains approximately $20,000 higher than the U.S. median household income of $64,994. The industries earning the highest annual wage are management enterprises ($174,842), finance ($133,931), utilities ($122,184), and information ($117,433). Industries with the lowest annual wage are food service ($23,839), retail ($36,379), arts and entertainment ($37,988). Counties earning the highest annual wage are Somerset ($91,866), Morris ($88,117), Hudson ($79,639), and Mercer ($75,664) with Cape May ($35,378), Ocean ($42,548), Cumberland ($43,714), and Atlantic ($43,772) earning the lowest annual wage (New Jersey Department of Labor 2013-2019 Average Annual Wage Report). New Jersey's poverty rate of 9.7% is lower than the national average of 12.8%. Childhood poverty affects 13.3% of New Jersey youth aged 18 years and under, 14.4% of children under five years old live in poverty and 13% of children aged five to 17 years old live in poverty. Counties with the highest rates of childhood poverty are Salem (24%), Passaic (23%), Cumberland (22%), Essex (21%), and Hudson (20%).

Educational attainment - New Jersey residents by and large have higher educational attainment than the national average with 40.7% of New Jersey residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher versus the national average where 32.9% of national residents have a bachelor's degree or higher; 26.7% of residents have a high school diploma or equivalent. New Jersey has an adult literacy rate of 83% with 17% of the adult population lacking basic prose literacy (2022 World Population Review). New Jersey's percentage of children enrolled in K-12 schooling is slightly lower than the national average with 65.7% of New Jersey children enrolled in school versus 66.3% of children enrolled nationally.

The employment landscape - New Jersey has an employment rate of 61.8%, which is slightly higher than the 59.6% national average. Most employed residents work for private companies (70.6%), 13.7% of residents are local, state, and federal employees, 7.1% of residents work for non-profits, and 8.7% of residents are self-employed. Approximately 7% of residents work from home and 11% use public transportation to get to work.

Voter registration - The New Jersey Division of Elections reports 6,432,702 registered voters as of May 2022 with the highest number of registered voters living in Bergen (667,035), Essex (564,380) and Middlesex County (561,863).

Incarceration and re-entry - New Jersey has 19 jails and nine state prisons. New Jersey has 12,492 people in the corrections system with 10,260 people incarcerated in the prison complex, 1,139 in the youth complex, and 1,093 in satellite units (halfway houses, county jails, or central medical unit). Ten New Jersey counties (Atlantic, Bergen, Camden, Essex, Hudson, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Passaic and Union) account for 76% of incarcerated people. Essex County is the highest rate of incarceration (14%) (New Jersey Department of Corrections 2022 Offender Characteristics Report). As of 2019, 15,194 persons are on parole and 127,804 people are on probation (National Institute of Corrections).

Technology

New Jersey has more households with internet subscriptions than the national average (88% compared to 85.5% nationally). Most New Jersey residents have access to technology with 93% of households owning a computer and 88% of households connected to broadband internet. In urban areas, 99% of New Jersey locations have three or more broadband providers, whereas 96% of rural locations have three or more broadband providers (2020 FCC Fixed Broadband Deployment Map). Though the majority of New Jersey has broadband providers available, there is a gap with 12% of households not purchasing or not able to purchase broadband internet, which means these households are unable to access digital library resources and information. Libraries in southern New Jersey, many of which do not have broadband access or strong connectivity, are unable to benefit widely from key LSTA funded digital services.

THE LIBRARY ECOSYSTEM IN NEW JERSEY

Government landscape - The governmental landscape, and therefore New Jersey's library services landscape, is extremely complex. There are more than 550 municipalities in the state including boroughs, cities, towns, townships and villages. There are even more public-school districts operating and more than 80 institutions of higher learning ranging from major public research universities to small Talmudic institutions and theological seminaries.

Libraries by the numbers - The Garden State is home to nearly 300 separate public library entities (294) that operate more than 400 (438) public library facilities. The public library system is made up of 233 municipal libraries, 42 association libraries that operate in a non-profit status, 14 county libraries, and five joint libraries. Approximately 2,000 school library/media centers serve the students in the state's 600+ public school districts. Private school, academic and special libraries add several hundred more to the mix.

Financial support and disparities - Collectively, local support for public library services in New Jersey is traditionally strong. National statistics from the IMLS Public Libraries Survey (PLS) for 2019 show that the state's libraries enjoyed local per capita support of $55.66 (operating revenue), high enough to qualify for the 9th position among the states (exclusive of the District of Columbia). That said, the disparities across systems and regions are stark. The Ocean County Library is the highest funded library in New Jersey with an annual budget of roughly $39 million, presumably due to a high tax base from seasonal shore communities. Somerset County, the second highest, is funded at less than half the level of Ocean ($18 million). Expenditures of public libraries at the bottom ten positions in terms of local support range from $9 up to $33 per capita (with one outlier at the very bottom at less than $2). Note that federal support per capita is $0.11. This underscores the point that federal funding is intended to work at scale but does not dramatically impact the per capita funding of any given library.

The third of a mill equation - Public library funding in New Jersey is driven by the real property tax base of a given county, municipality, or locale. Per state library legislation, a municipal or joint municipal library is entitled to receive a third of a mill from their town every year, which is calculated by multiplying .0003333333 by the equalized valuation of all the real property in a town. For county libraries, a fifteenth of a mill is the legislated minimum; however, all counties

exceed this rate. (Monmouth County is the lowest, assessing at approximately a fifth of a mill.) In practical terms, the third of a mill requirement creates ripple effects and consequences across the library ecosystem. If a municipality opts to operate standalone library service, rather than participate in a county system, they take their tax base with them. As a result, municipal libraries within a county often pool resources and wealth, reducing the tax base to fund the county system as a whole.

Consortiums - Consortiums are a significant contributor to service delivery in New Jersey. Currently, six consortiums operate throughout the state. In the most robust example, the consortium provides a suite of services to member libraries that includes an inter-consortium delivery system, continuing education, professional development, advocacy, eResources, and a shared catalog. In the newest consortium, the only shared service is a catalog. Roughly half of the public libraries in New Jersey are supported or served by a consortium, with varying levels of support.

Partners - There is a strong triangle of partnership between NJSL, the New Jersey Library Association, and LibraryLinkNJ, a non-profit organization that receives funding from the state library to facilitate interlibrary loan and delivery across the state. NJSL's government partners include the Governor's Office, the New Jersey Office of Innovation, the Department of Human Services, the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Thomas Edison State University is the umbrella that houses the state library, with additional opportunities for partnership. NJSL also works with a number of vendors and programmatic partners for the delivery of LSTA programs and has a working list of potential partners ripe for future collaboration(s). Specific to LSTA, NJSL facilitates an LSTA Advisory Council made up of 10 library representatives and directors from across the state. The group meets regularly to provide guidance on strategy, projects, activities, and ongoing implementation.

HOW LSTA DOLLARS SUPPORT NEW JERSEY LIBRARIES AND RESIDENTS TODAY

In 2020, NJSL spent $4,111,011 to deliver LSTA funded projects to New Jersey libraries and patrons. The three projects receiving the largest amount of LSTA funding are:

JerseyClicks providing statewide library users access to 23 databases spanning an array of content including genealogy, newspapers, academic, and language learning resources that allow library users to meet their personal, educational, and occupational goals. JerseyClicks served as a vital source of information access during the pandemic with 42,843,057 user sessions in 2021 alone.

The Talking Book Braille Center (TBBC) providing direct statewide library services to New Jersey's print disabled population of 3,357 registered users by circulating 354,022 BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download) audiobooks and magazines. TBBC administers LEAP (Library Equal Access Program) which provides assistive technology training for visually impaired persons over 55 years-old through eight LEAP Technology Learning Centers housed in local libraries. NJSL is piloting a Braille Reader project in partnership with the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled providing 100 handheld braille readers that download BARD database audiobooks and magazines.

JerseyConnect Statewide Technology Program providing technology services to New Jersey public libraries including low-cost internet access, web hosting and infrastructure, and technology services with 23 libraries utilizing all JerseyConnect services and 363 libraries (80%) using at least one JerseyConnect service.

NJSL 2020 LSTA Project Funds Allocation

$4,111,001 total LSTA Funds Allocated (2020)
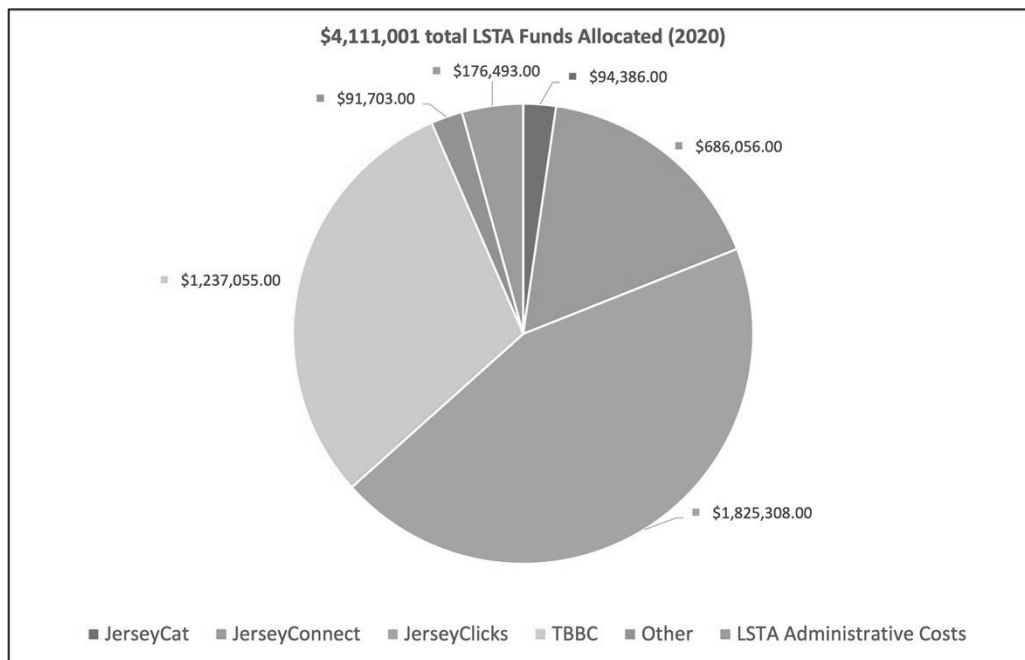
The remaining $362,582 of LSTA funding was used for "Other" projects ($91,703), administration ($176,493), and staffing for the JerseyCat interlibrary loan project ($94,386) with project delivery services primarily funded through state match funds. New Jersey Statewide Statistics, LYRASIS membership and digitization services are categorized as "Other" projects in the *NJSL 2020 LSTA Project Funds Allocation* graphic.

The NJSL 2018-2022 LSTA Five-Year Plan evaluation provides key findings for LSTA goal performance and informs proposed project outcomes for the next five-year LSTA plan period. The evaluation was conducted by Linda Hofschire, principal of LJH Consulting, LLC and includes data for fiscal years 2018-2020, the period where data was available. To meet the needs of staff and patrons, NJSL carried out 89 activities that satisfied three IMLS focal areas: Institutional Capacity (47% of activities), Information Access (37% of activities), and Lifelong Learning (16% of activities). Over half (53%) of all activities had library workforce as the target audience. During the 2018-2020 evaluation period, NJSL used 96% of the total LSTA funds ($12,392,824) to achieve Goal 1: Information Access (60% of LSTA budget), Goal 2: Institutional Capacity (2% of LSTA budget) and Goal 3: Lifelong Learning (34% of LSTA budget). The remaining 4% of LSTA funding was allocated to administration.

According to the evaluation, NJSL was successful in achieving Goal 1: Information Access through the delivery of seven projects that provided convenient access to information resources and are relied upon by libraries to extend information resources to library patrons. NJSL also achieved Goal 2: Institutional Capacity, primarily through the JerseyConnect program, which supported 80% of New Jersey libraries with one or more technology offerings that built capacity to provide additional service to their community. Though Goal 3 projects were associated with positive outcomes (Summer Reading, 90%) and provided critical services for the print disabled population (TBBC, 75%), these projects as a whole only partially achieved Goal 3 due to the programs' highly targeted audience which restricted broad lifelong learning service offerings.

WHAT WE HEARD

The research team took special care to hear from a variety of library staff across multiple counties and regions of New Jersey.

From February through April 2022, Advancing with Purpose conducted a needs assessment of public library directors, library staff, and consortium members to understand the benefits and challenges experienced by libraries participating in NJSL LSTA projects. The team spoke directly with customers of the Talking Book and Braille Center, which is the second largest program in terms of funding. Research methods and participation are summarized as follows:

Surveys - administered a 22-question survey to staff members of 21 county libraries and received 193 total responses. Survey responses were collected from March 14th through March 31, 2022 and took an average of 14 minutes to complete.

Focus Groups - held four focus groups with County Directors (9 participants), Small Library Directors (4), Consortium Directors (5), and Talking Book Braille customers (5).

Individual and Small Group Interviews –conducted eight individual and small group interviews with NJSL staff (3) and library directors (5 interviews; 8 participants)

The primary goals for the needs assessment were to:

- Test awareness and knowledgeability of LSTA-funded programs among library staff at the local level.

- Assess the value of LSTA-funded programs among library staff at the local level and test assumptions of what is important to library directors when it comes to how to best supplement their programs with federal dollars.

- Identify gaps in program offerings and areas of need to inform future changes in the distribution of LSTA funds to New Jersey libraries.

2022 Needs Assessment Participant Distribution

Survey Respondents

There was a strong distribution of survey responses across the state with North and Central New Jersey receiving near equal distribution (38%, 40%) where South New Jersey had a lower response rate of 22%. The majority of survey respondents work for a public library (96%) and responses were equally distributed between management (50%) and library staff (50%).

Of public library respondents, the majority of responses were received from libraries serving a population under 100,000 residents (86%) with 14% of respondents serving a population over 100,000 residents.
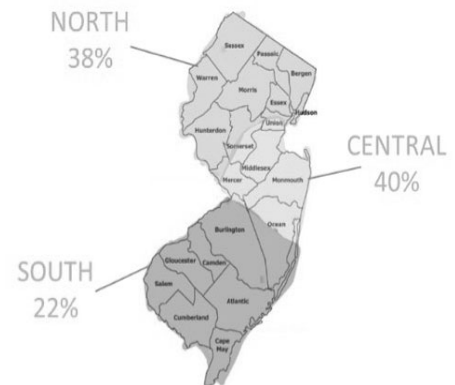
2022 Survey Respondents

LSTA Program Familiarity & Favorability

NJSL library staff have high overall familiarity with LSTA funded projects (94%). According to top box survey ratings of *very familiar* to *moderately familiar*, JerseyCat was the service most familiar to and well utilized by library staff (80% and 81% respectively), followed by JerseyClicks (68% and 75% respectively) and JerseyConnect (60% and 62% respectively). TBBC was the least familiar service and least utilized by library staff (39% and 25% respectively). Note that increased staff familiarity with TBBC would likely result in downstream use by customers; however, staff are not the primary audience or end users for this service.
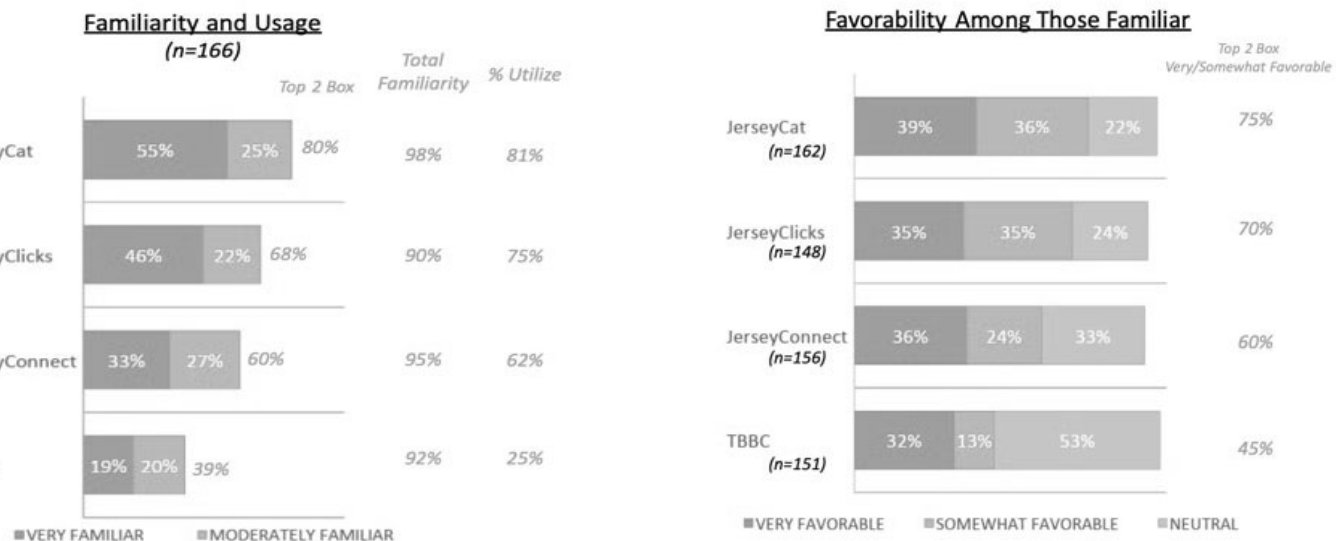
2022 Survey Respondent LSTA Project Familiarity, Usage, & Favorability Ratings Chart

JerseyCat and JerseyClicks are viewed as the most favorable of LSTA-funded projects (75%, 70%), followed by JerseyConnect (60%). TBBC stands apart with library staff having no strong opinion regarding the benefit of this service (45%), presumably due to staff being less familiar with the program. TBBC is a program directed primarily at end users with a specific profile of needs. To gain additional qualitative data, the research team held a focus group with TBBC

customers. Participants described the life-changing implications of TBBC programs, along with a desire for advocacy and awareness to reach more intended beneficiaries. They highlighted how new technology innovations are game changers for the community, along with the value of having timely access to new releases in digital format. The group emphasized that their constituency is not a monolith, including newly blind seniors and children receiving service through schools. In their own words, participants said: "TBBC is about independence and knowledge - learning is knowledge, and knowledge can be turned into power, and power can be turned into confidence."
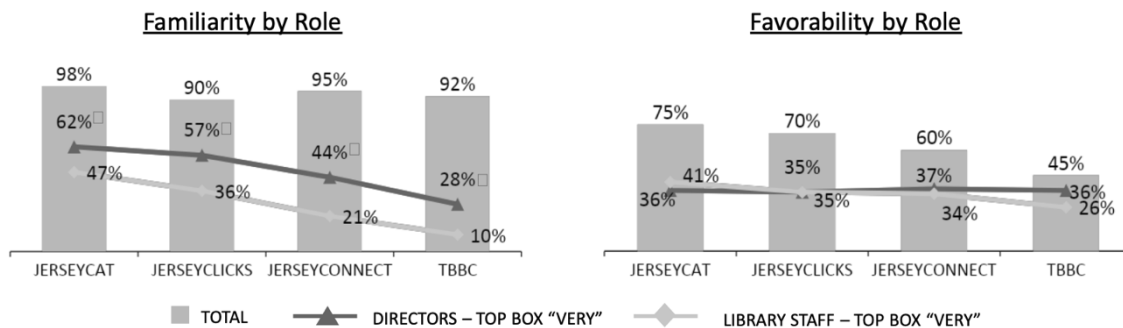
2022 Survey Respondent LSTA Project Familiarity & Favorability by Role Ratings Chart

When looking at familiarity by library role, library directors were significantly more familiar (48%) with all LSTA projects than staff (29%). However, among staff that are aware of LSTA project, directors and staff share similar favorable opinions about the projects (36%, 34%). The gap in familiarity of LSTA projects among staff demonstrates an opportunity to increase staff awareness and training on what these projects offer and how best to utilize their services.

LSTA Program Importance & Performance

JerseyCat, JerseyClicks and TBBC all deliver on important areas of information access and meeting customer's educational needs. Opportunities to increase service use and awareness among library staff rests with increasing ease of use and navigation (86%) coupled with increased staff training (68%) and technical support (67%). Incorporating customer feedback into project development across all projects was identified as an area of important improvement to 67% of survey respondents. Below is a breakdown of performance by key project.

Areas of Satisfaction

- JerseyCat: accessibility to different information sources.

- JerseyClicks: information access and meeting customers' educational, professional, and recreational needs.

- JerseyConnect: adds unique value in supporting library operations and providing a sophisticated technology service.

- TBBC: meets customers' recreational and educational needs.

> "TBBC is a wonderful service, it changes lives, but only a small portion of our population utilizes it."
>
> "This is an essential service but there is a branding issue. Staff are not totally familiar, it needs better promotion."

> "I'd like to have training around how to use JerseyCat. I'd like to have webinar videos that staff can watch or meetings to update us on stuff. This may exist already but I can't find it."

Areas for Improvement

- JerseyCat: ease of use (56%), modernizing technology (42%), and providing adequate training for staff (44%).

- JerseyClicks: ease of use (53%), improvements in information and content (49%), and increased understanding of services available and how they work (47%).

- JerseyConnect: more education and transparency into how services operate and function (82%).

  o Improvement to services related to internet speed and access to bridge digital divide (35%).

  o Upgrades to modernize technology and improve user interface experience (33%).

- TBBC: better understanding of service offering and how it works (86%).

  o Increased customer feedback (57%).

  o Clarity on who to refer to TBBC services and how to make the referrals (57%).

> "I would say JerseyConnect is very important to us. It saved huge when small libraries are not able to host their own server and to have in-house IT service team."

> "(JerseyClicks) paid databases such as Consumer Report, Brainfuse, Ebsco, are great resources for our patrons. It would be a financial burden if a small library like ours are to pay out of pocket. We won't be able to afford (it)."

Future Needs and Value-Add Services

- Library staff most valued Zoom video conferencing (87%) and Brainfuse (74%) delivered through CARES Act funding.

- Library staff have future need for eBooks (82%).

- Continuing support for these services would be highly valuable to libraries.

> "Things like Zoom platform and Brainfuse are hard to replace when you become dependent on these services."

Summary of Key Themes

NJSL Library Leadership reviewed the findings from the needs assessment alongside the recommendations from the 2018-2022 LSTA evaluation. The group surfaced areas of continuity, such as prioritization of statewide access to information resources, repeated requests for statewide marketing strategies, and ways that evaluation and feedback loops could better inform programs and plans. The group distilled five key themes to inform the design process going forward.

Summary of Key Themes

MARKETING & TRAINING

Constituents want greater awareness of services, training support for products, and NJSL leadership to create a New Jersey way.

REGIONAL & STRUCTURAL DIVIDES

These inequities - real and perceived - make statewide coordination harder. There is also a belief that vision and leadership are possible.

TBBC

This program and its staff are highly valued; however there are perceptions of underutilization with respect to the allotted budget

USABILITY OF INTERFACES

This applies to the format for an online newspaper, multiple apps and portals, and the convenience customers will increasingly expect.

OLD MODEL / NEW MODEL

If the old model structured programs for one-size-fits-all, libraries are curious about new models for tailored services and innovation.

The qualitative and quantitative research from the needs assessment resulted in five key themes

HOW LSTA DOLLARS MIGHT BEST SUPPORT NEW JERSEY LIBRARIES IN THE FUTURE

To identify how LSTA dollars might best be allocated to address key themes identified in the needs assessment, the NJSL team participated in a series of design sessions to explore solutions based on eight guiding questions. The questions were intentionally formatted to unlock organizational curiosity about opportunities, before shifting to problem-solving and solutions.

1. How might we tailor and/or scale LSTA programs for differently resourced libraries?
2. How might we provide attractive opportunities to test, pilot, and innovate at the local level?
3. How might we increase awareness and understanding of LSTA funded services and resources for library staff?
4. How might we provide tools and resources to our libraries, partners & collaborators to help them better assess and evaluate their successes and progress?
5. How might we further EDI goals into programs for libraries to help serve a constantly changing and underserved population?
6. How might we encourage innovation within our key LSTA programs?
7. How might we improve the customer journey and end-to-end experience for each program?
8. How might we empower library staff to be knowledgeable ambassadors of (LSTA) programs and services?

After a brainstorm and sense-making phase, staff refined results to create the overarching goals, projects, and activities as presented in the next section.

Goals & Projects

Guiding Principles of the NJSL 2023-2027 Plan

The New Jersey State Library uses Federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds to help support library service across the state. Our goal is to provide a great return-on-investment for New Jersey libraries:

- We focus on high priority areas that would be inefficient or cost prohibitive for individual libraries to undertake alone.
- We invest in programs that help less well-resourced libraries and residents.
- We encourage innovation and experimentation in New Jersey libraries.

GOAL #1 - FACILITATE GREAT END-TO-END EXPERIENCES WITH LSTA PROGRAMS

Projects	Electronic Resources	TBBC	*JerseyCat*
Activities	• Research & engagement for 2025 renewal • Data sharing & local evaluation tools • User testing and customer experience	• Usability testing when NLS moves to cloud • Outreach and expansion through key partners • Research and statewide staff engagement > offer new tools	*JerseyCat will be supported with state funds. Options and funding models are being explored in Year 1.*
	STAFF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT		

Facilitate great end-to-end experiences with LSTA programs - Goal #1 emphasizes the importance of end-to-end experiences that center around the customer. At every point in the customer's journey through a product or service, there is an opportunity to provide a consistently excellent experience. As a field, libraries are increasingly adopting the user experience (UX) techniques that began with product testing in IT. The discipline has expanded to include a full range of customer experiences (CX) methodologies. NJSL's top two projects in terms of funding - Electronic Resources and TBBC

- both serve customers across a range of touch points and channels. Through the needs assessment, library staff affirmed the value and importance of both programs. At the same time, they surfaced a range of opportunities to enhance the overall service experience of each project. By making the customer's journey the overarching goal, NJSL will prioritize activities that lead to concerted improvements over time.

Activities and opportunities for electronic resources - Currently, the majority of electronic resources are on a three-year renewal cycle, which will come up for review again in 2025. For the most recent renewal, staff followed a working group approach to develop checklists for evaluation and review. With a three-year lead time until the next renewal, they will research new product approaches, and consider user experience across products, and marketing opportunities to bundle and promote products for different subsets of libraries.

Throughout the needs assessment, library staff consistently requested better feedback loops for data sharing about local use of electronic resources. As a companion tool, the state library would like to develop local assessment tools, which will assist libraries with parsing and making meaning of data sets. A range of evaluation tools are envisioned, which could include audience mapping for targeted promotion to key segments, staff assessments with a menu for training options, and a template for staff to conduct a hands-on user test with a customer on a specific product.

In addition to user testing templates at the local level, which could funnel up through a feedback mechanism, NJSL will invest in formal user testing and customer experience mapping for key products, apps, and interfaces. In the needs assessment, library staff emphasized that a multiplicity of apps and logons is challenging and simplification where possible is desirable. They shared that format for certain activities, such as reading a newspaper, is equally if not more important than access to content. For example, libraries might purchase a duplicate electronic copy of a popular item to obtain their customers preferred interface. As a result of user testing, NJSL will be positioned to prioritize products and packages that facilitate great experiences for the 2025 renewal and beyond.

Activities and opportunities for TBBC - The National Library Service (NLS) is in the process of moving to the cloud, which will enable a one-stop-shop for users to view their content across multiple devices (player, phone, iPad, etc.). TBBC will conduct user testing to better understand the customer journeys associated with this change and how to facilitate great end-to-end experiences. They will explore tactics to communicate the benefits of the NLS service enhancement to library staff and end users.

TBBC has a list of key partners who are ripe for partnership and expansion. As evidenced throughout the needs assessment, the TBBC user base encompasses a wide variety of personas and profiles, from young children and families who are navigating early literacy needs to newly blind seniors. TBBC will formalize key partner relationships and customize programmatic support for each audience. Spanish language outreach will be a designated area of focus.

Recent technological innovations are revolutionizing service options for TBBC customers. For example, TBBC participated in a recent electronic braille reader pilot, which put the equivalent of a van full of print braille volumes into a single handheld device. TBBC will design a staff-led research campaign to visit libraries and speak with librarians about their customer needs. TBBC staff have deep relationships with their current active yet limited set of end users. They will gather information to connect the dots about how to help frontline library staff market existing resources at their libraries. From there, TBBC is hopeful that pilots such as the electronic braille reader can be adopted at scale within the next five years, building on their strengthened network with local libraries.

Approach to the JerseyCat project - As a result of the needs assessment, NJSL is exploring whether the small amount of LSTA funding that supports the state interlibrary loan program (JerseyCat) could potentially be appropriated from a different source. JerseyCat is a standalone program with a large budget that requires its own strategic plan and initiatives.

Outcomes and use of funds - At the end of the five-year plan, NJSL will have enhanced the end-to-end experience across its top two programs. Library staff and customers will benefit from a concerted approach over time to facilitate seamless customer journeys. Anticipated results include increased usage and adoption by new audiences including less well-resourced residents. Funds will be used for the operational costs of both projects and prioritized to support the improvement activities described above.

Goal #1 maps to the IMLS Information Access focal area.

GOAL #2 - PROVIDE KEY VALUE-ADD RESOURCES AND PROCESS SUPPORT

Projects	Statewide Marketing Strategies	JerseyConnect
Activities	• KM (internal and external) • Feedback loops & formal listening • Onboarding tools	• User research in the field • Self-assessment tool + consulting • Collaborative design / Data sharing & unified data sets
	STAFF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT	

Provide key value-add resources and process support - Throughout the needs assessment, library directors surfaced areas where statewide leadership, tools, and support would be most useful. Rather than reinvent the wheel for individual locations and consortiums, or disregard important topics due to insufficient local resources, they identified key places for a collective approach. The Goal #2 projects respond to two top needs in this regard: statewide marketing strategies specific to LSTA programs and technology support so all libraries can have their IT infrastructure needs met. Goal #2 is designed to create feedback loops between NJSL and New Jersey libraries for an iterative approach. The intent is to continually learn and affirm that NJSL is prioritizing the right resources and investing in the right supports, given the finite dollars available.

Activities and opportunities for statewide marketing strategies (specific to LSTA programs) - Through a collection of strategies, NJSL will help market the LSTA programs/projects described in the plan. In the area of knowledge management (KM), there are internal opportunities at NJSL to share data across LSTA programs more effectively. For example, programs can work from common distribution lists and shared notes based on field visits to libraries. Externally, libraries across the state would benefit from a unified KM portal and knowledge sharing tools. Feedback loops and feedback mechanisms can be studied and embedded in a variety of ways. Ideally, mechanisms will be interwoven into KM design as a whole and corresponding KM practices. Similarly, a standard toolkit to onboard new staff would inculcate key messages and resources from the first day on the job, a first step to creating a "New Jersey way."

Activities and opportunities for JerseyConnect - JerseyConnect provides hands-on technology support and consultation to New Jersey libraries. The staff at JerseyConnect has eyes and ears at libraries throughout the state. With frequent site visits and regular consultations, they talk to directors and staff at a higher rate than any other program. In tandem with marketing strategies, they are an asset to capture feedback and bring back real-time observations. With collaboration and cross-pollination at NJSL, JerseyConnect staff can conduct ongoing user research that includes but is not limited to technology. JerseyConnect is also well positioned to create library self-assessment tools for their services, in a similar vein to local evaluation tools from JerseyClicks. These tools empower local libraries to do the work on their own behalf, with support and guidance from NJSL. Finally, as KM work moves forward, JerseyConnect staff will contribute to requirements gathering, collaborative design, and meeting technology needs associated with KM solutions.

At the end of the five-year plan, NJSL will have stronger feedback loops to provide key resources and support to 300+ New Jersey libraries. Through mutually reinforcing cycles, program awareness - for staff and customers alike - will improve. Similar to Goal #1, anticipated results include increased usage and adoption by new audiences including less well-resourced libraries and residents. Funds will be used for the operational costs of JerseyConnect and prioritized to support marketing, KM, and emerging needs over the lifecycle of the plan.

Goal #2 maps to the IMLS Build Institutional Capacity focal area.

GOAL #3 - CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO CUSTOMIZE & INNOVATE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Projects	Mini Grants	EDI Audit & Tools
Activities	• Cohorts • Innovation challenge • Partner with statewide organizations	• Menus • Spanish language focus
	STAFF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT	

Provide opportunities to customize and innovate at the local level - Goal #3 responds to themes from the needs assessment that programs should evolve from a one-size-fits all structure to support tailored service and customization at the local level. Goals #1 and #2 incorporate more personalized support as well; however, Goal #3 is specifically focused on cultivating new opportunities.

Activities and opportunities for mini-grants - In the past few years, NJSL has offered small grant opportunities - largely with CARES and ARPA Act funds. They have piloted new services at select libraries, including: NJ Health @ Your

Library, a telemedicine program to address inequities exacerbated by Covid; NJSL + Partners Access Navigator program, which places a cohort of skilled trainers (navigators) in libraries to provide individualized assistance to persons seeking employment, job training, or digital competence; and NJSL + Partners Literacy Project to establish public libraries as local literacy hubs that support residents in achieving literacy – digital, financial, workforce, adult basic, English language – according to local needs. Based on feedback and learning, future mini-grants might create cohorts who embark on the process together, thus incorporating training, development, cross-pollination, and mentoring. The application process will be designed to reduce barriers to participation and make it approachable for less well-resourced libraries to take part. Similarly, NJSL would like to spur innovation in ways that are focused and cohesive. A statewide innovation challenge with seed funding is a potential option. The mini-grants and "small bets" funding models also lend themselves to partnership with other state agencies, such as the Office of Innovation, which amplifies reach, buy-in, and future scalability.

Activities and opportunities for EDI audits and tools - In the statewide survey, staff elevated EDI as the area where they aspire to be a leader and model for other states, with NJSL as their driver and champion. As a first step, NJSL would conduct an internal EDI audit to identify, implement, and model key actions and behaviors. From there, they would work collaboratively to provide auditing tools for local libraries, as well as training and support. NJSL may develop menus to help libraries market resources to specific audiences. Spanish-language resources and marketing are a potential area of focus. Over time, best practices and needs in this space will continue to emerge, such as a BIPOC emerging leaders cohort, to form the basis for future activities.

Outcomes and use of funds - At the end of the five-year plan, NJ libraries will have more tailored resources and support to meet individual needs and experiment at the local level. With knowledge sharing channels, successful experiments can adapt and scale to new locations. As a whole, New Jersey libraries will advance in their journey to be engines of equity and anti-racist role models. Funds will be used for mini-grants, seed funding, and EDI consultants and related support. In year one, these will be relatively small amounts given the magnitude of other programs. Over time, funds can be judiciously identified for emerging priorities and needs.

Goal #3 maps to the IMLS Lifelong Learning focal area.

TIMELINE

The timeline below charts project activities across the five-year strategic plan timeline.

Goal	Project	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Facilitate great end-to-end experiences with LSTA Programs	TBBC	Site visits and user research	NLS usability testing	New models for outreach	New models continued	New models evaluated
	Electronic Resources	Scope and plan for UX review	UX review	Assemble options for new RFP	Communication and iterative feedback	Evaluate usage in new model
	JerseyCat	Explore alternate funding	TBD			
Provide key value-add resources & process support	Statewide LSTA Marketing Strategies	Onboard new NJSL marketing position	Listening sessions and key graphics	Internal KM	External KM pilot	Evaluate pilot
	JerseyConnect	Cross-program design sessions	Library self-assessment tools	Support internal KM	Support external KM	Evaluation
Create opportunities to customize & innovate at the local level	Mini Grants	Iterate ideas w/ current grants	Launch new cohort	Innovation challenge/cohort		
	EDI Audit & Tools	Develop scope and requirements for internal NJSL audit	NJSL audit	Develop state tools	Implement and iterate	

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Coordination Efforts

The following table contains a crosswalk mapping NJSL LSTA goals to IMLS Measuring Success focal areas, and maps LSTA project activities to corresponding LSTA intents.

New Jersey State Library LSTA Crosswalk

	GOAL 1: FACILITATE GREAT END-TO-END EXPERIENCES WITH LSTA PROGRAMS			GOAL 2: PROVIDE KEY VALUE-ADD RESOURCES AND PROCESS SUPPORT		GOAL 3: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES TO CUSTOMIZE & INNOVATE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL	
Measuring Success Focal Area	INFORMATION ACCESS			BUILD INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY		LIFELONG LEARNING	
Objectives	To improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources			Improve library operations		Improve users' formal education	
	Improve users' ability to obtain and/or use information resources			Improve library's physical and technology infrastructure		Improve users' general knowledge and skills	
				Improve libraries workforce			
Projects	ELECTRONIC RESOURCES	TALKING BOOK AND BRAILLE CENTER	JERSEYCAT	STATEWIDE MARKETING STRATEGIES	JERSEYCONNECT	MINI GRANTS	EDI AUDIT &TOOLS
Activities	Research & engagement for 2023 renewal	Usability testing when NLS moves to cloud	*JerseyCat will be phased out of LSTA funding starting in 2024*	KM (internal & external)	User research in the field	Cohorts	Menus
Activities	Data sharing & local evaluation tools	Outreach & expansion through key partners		Feedback loops & formal listening	Self-assessment tool + consulting	Innovation Challenge	Second Language Focus
Activities	User testing & customer experience	Research and statewide staff engagement > offer new tools		Onboarding tools	Collaborative design/Data sharing & unified data sets	Partner with Statewide Organizations	
	Staff Training & Development			Staff Training & Development		Staff Training & Development	
LSTA Purposes met (summarized)							
1. Fed program coordination							
2. Continuous improvement	x	x		x	x	x	x
3. Access to resources	x	x		x	x	x	x
4. Resource sharing	x	x		x	x	x	x
5. Promote literacy	x	x					x
6. Meet community needs	x	x		x	x	x	x
7. Support community revitalization	x	x				x	x
8. Enhance library employee skills	x	x		x	x	x	x
9. Preserve knowledge	x	x		x			
10. US information infrastructure	x	x		x	x		
11. Collaboration at all levels	x	x		x	x	x	x
12. Model programs	x	x				x	x
Grants to States objectives (summarized)							
1 Expand Services	x	x		x	x	x	x
2. Improve coordination	x	x		x	x	x	x
3. Library professional development	x	x		x	x	x	x
4. Develop partnerships		x		x	x	x	x
5. Target diversity	x	x		x	x	x	x
6. Target underserved	x	x		x	x	x	x
7. Provide information access through collaboration at all levels	x	x		x	x	x	x

Evaluation Plan

The primary methodology for planning and evaluation will be tied to the annual reporting cycle. In Q4 each fiscal year, NJSL will initiate evaluation activities in preparation for the State Program Report and craft the implementation strategy for the year ahead. Summary reports from outcomes-based assessment questions will be factors into review, as well as indicators by goal. With feedback from the LSTA Advisory Council, the LSTA Coordinator will convene cross-program evaluation and design sessions, and present findings and recommendations to the state librarian. The objectives by goal are summarized in the crosswalk on page 21.

Stakeholder Involvement

The LSTA Advisory Council was established to ensure broad, representative stakeholder involvement and stewardship of the Plan. NJSL specifically designated a project in the 2023-2027 plan for statewide marketing strategies, to include feedback loops and formal listening opportunities from channels across New Jersey.

Communication and Public Availability

The NJSL 2023 – 2027 LSTA Plan will be shared with NJSL staff and specific portions of the Plan will be reviewed in detail with individuals whose responsibilities relate to carrying out the projects and activities described in the document.

The Plan will also be presented to NJSL's formal affiliate, Thomas Edison State University, the LSTA Advisory Council, and other appropriate agencies within state government. NJSL will alert New Jersey public libraries of the plan's availability and the Plan will be publicly available on the agency website as well as on the IMLS website.

LSTA Advisory Council members will receive periodic updates on LSTA-funded activities at their regularly scheduled meetings and advise on communication strategies relative to the plan.

Monitoring

NJSL will monitor the implementation of its Library Services and Technology Act Five-Year LSTA Plan for 2023-2027 using procedures outlined in 2 CFR 200.328-332.

Assurances

Required certifications and assurances listed below are included as a separate attachment in the email submission of this plan

- Program Assurances for 2023 Grant Award (includes compliance with Internet Safety; Trafficking in Persons; Nondiscrimination; Debarment and Suspension; Drug-Free Workplace; Federal Debt Status; and Lobbying requirements)

- Assurances of Non-Construction Programs

- State Legal Officer's Certification of Authorized Certifying Official

- Internet Safety Certification for Applicant Public Libraries, Public Elementary and Secondary School Libraries, and Consortia with Public and/or Public School Libraries